



DELAWARE ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE, INC.

1783 FRIENDS WAY, CAMDEN, DELAWARE 19934 Telephone: (302) 739-5411

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July 29th, 2026

Public Statement on Police Accountability, Transparency, and Public Trust

As Delaware enters another period of public discussion surrounding policing, accountability, and potential legislative reforms, it is important that those conversations begin with an accurate understanding of the systems that already exist. Productive public policy is built on facts, collaboration, and a willingness to evaluate whether existing safeguards are functioning as intended, not on the assumption that accountability mechanisms do not exist.

Over the past several years, Delaware has implemented some of the most significant law enforcement reforms in its history. Those changes were not the result of one group imposing its will on another; they were achieved through collaboration among legislators, law enforcement leaders, police labor organizations, prosecutors, community stakeholders, and regulatory bodies. While reasonable people may disagree on whether additional reforms are necessary, those discussions should recognize the substantial work that has already been accomplished and the oversight systems that are currently in place.

The Delaware Association of Chiefs of Police remains committed to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. We also believe the public deserves a complete understanding of the policies, safeguards, and independent oversight mechanisms that govern policing today so that future conversations are informed by fact rather than perception.

Much of the current public discussion is framed around the assumption that law enforcement has resisted accountability or meaningful reform. That simply is not an accurate reflection of what has occurred in Delaware over the past several years. In fact, what was once known as the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights (LEOBOR) has already undergone significant reform and is now the Police Officers' Due Process and Accountability Act. Those changes were not made in isolation. Delaware police chiefs, police labor organizations, legislators, and Department of Justice worked collaboratively to modernize the law in a way that strengthened accountability while preserving the due process rights afforded to every public employee.

Those reforms closed potential procedural loopholes, expanded transparency with complainants, required that incidents involving serious, substantiated allegations be publicly disclosed, and ensured that investigations are completed and reported to the Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission even if an officer resigns before the investigation concludes. That last provision prevents an officer from simply resigning to avoid accountability and seeking employment elsewhere.



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Equally important, Delaware established the Police Officer Standards and Training Commission (POST) as the state's independent regulatory authority for law enforcement. POST was intentionally structured with more non-sworn members and is responsible for establishing professional standards, evaluating policies and best practices, maintaining officer certification, and, when warranted, decertifying officers who no longer meet those standards. Alongside POST, the Delaware Police Accreditation Commission (DPAC) evaluates agencies against nationally recognized best practices and promotes continuous improvement through accreditation. These organizations, together with existing statutory reporting requirements, internal affairs processes, civilian complaint procedures, prosecutorial review, judicial oversight, and administrative discipline, create multiple layers of accountability that already exist today.

Before proposing additional legislation, there is a responsibility to fully understand the oversight mechanisms that are already in place and fund them appropriately. Public policy is strongest when it builds upon proven safeguards rather than assuming they do not exist, or that they are ineffective. Legislating without first engaging the agencies and regulatory bodies that are charged with oversight risks creating redundant or conflicting requirements that may complicate accountability rather than strengthen it.

The discussion surrounding transparency deserves the same thoughtful approach. Transparency should never be confused with immediacy. The objective is to provide the public with accurate, complete, and reliable information, not simply the earliest information available. Releasing body-worn camera footage before investigators have collected all available evidence, interviewed witnesses, completed forensic analysis, and established the full context of an incident is not, by itself, transparency. In many cases, it leans more toward recklessness. A body-worn camera captures only one perspective during one moment in time. Without the benefit of a complete investigation, that footage is susceptible to misunderstanding, speculation, and public outrage rather than informed public understanding. True transparency occurs when the public is provided all relevant facts and the context necessary to fairly evaluate what occurred.

The same principle applies to personnel records. Calls to release complete personnel files often overlook the fact that those files contain much more than sustained misconduct. Like virtually every profession, they include unsubstantiated allegations, unfounded complaints, preliminary inquiries, protected personal information, medical information, performance evaluations, and other records that never resulted in a finding of wrongdoing. Releasing an entire personnel file would expose information that would never be released for teachers, physicians, firefighters, prosecutors, or virtually any other public or private professional. Accountability should be based on verified facts and sustained findings, never on allegations that were investigated and determined to be unsupported.



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Likewise, temporarily withholding an officer's identity during an active investigation serves several important purposes. It protects the integrity of the investigation, preserves the officer's due process rights, and reduces the potential for threats, harassment, or retaliation before the facts have been established. It is not to shield misconduct. Investigations should be driven by evidence, witness statements, forensic analysis, and applicable law, rather than public speculation or social media narratives. If serious sustained misconduct occurred, the public deserves a credible explanation. If it did not, the public deserves confidence that the conclusion resulted from an impartial investigation and not public or political pressure.

Ultimately, everyone should share the same objective. Accountability when it is warranted, transparency that can be provided responsibly, and investigations that are thorough, objective, and fair. Those principles are not mutually exclusive, and Delaware has already implemented meaningful reforms designed to advance each of them.

Perhaps the most important point is this: the public conversation surrounding policing is increasingly disconnected from the facts. We frequently hear that law enforcement must work to build public trust. Building and maintaining trust is an ongoing responsibility that every profession serving the public should embrace. At the same time, public confidence should be measured by objective evidence rather than political rhetoric. Gallup's 2024 survey on confidence in American institutions found that the police ranked third nationally in public confidence, behind only small business and the military, while newspapers, television news, and elected officials ranked among the lowest. That does not suggest there is no room for improvement. Every profession can improve. We can improve. It does suggest the public's confidence in law enforcement is much stronger than is often portrayed. There is a troubling irony when institutions that themselves face comparatively low levels of public confidence continue to drive a narrative that law enforcement lacks public trust. The more productive conversation is not one rooted in broad generalizations, but one focused on continuing to strengthen accountability through evidence-based policy while recognizing the substantial reforms and oversight mechanisms that already exist.

Despite the increasingly polarized environment surrounding policing, Delaware's law enforcement community has consistently remained willing to engage with legislators and community members in good faith. The reforms discussed above are just two examples of that commitment. They were not the product of confrontation; they were the product of collaboration. They resulted from policymakers who were willing to challenge law enforcement, hold us accountable where appropriate, and work alongside chiefs, officers, labor organizations, prosecutors, and other stakeholders to produce thoughtful, balanced policy.



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That collaborative approach is increasingly at risk. We are witnessing a growing trend in which some elected officials who have engaged in those constructive conversations and supported balanced reforms are themselves becoming targets of organized campaigns designed to discourage compromise. When the people willing to sit at the table and have difficult conversations are criticized simply for engaging with others, collaboration becomes more difficult. Over time, that discourages honest dialogue and replaces thoughtful policymaking with decisions driven by the loudest voices instead of the best ideas. The loudest voices are not always the most representative voices, and legislation developed in response to pressure rather than evidence rarely produces the best outcomes for our communities.

Law enforcement will continue to participate in those conversations because public safety deserves nothing less. But meaningful progress requires all participants be willing to engage with existing facts, understand the oversight systems already in place, and recognize that durable reform is achieved through collaboration, not by characterizing every disagreement as opposition to accountability.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "RP McCabe".

Richard P. McCabe
President, Delaware Association of Chiefs of Police
IACP /SACOP Chair, North Atlantic Region
Chief, New Castle City Police